

"Fifth Disease"



What is "Fifth Disease?"

"Fifth disease" (also known as erythema infectiosum) is a contagious viral illness caused by parvovirus B19. Parvovirus B19 infects only humans. There are animal parvoviruses but they do not infect humans.

Who gets "Fifth Disease?"

Although anyone can get "Fifth Disease" it is most commonly seen in children between the ages of 5 and 15. Although most adults do not recall having "Fifth Disease," 40% to 60% display laboratory evidence of past infection with Parvovirus B19. Once a person has been infected with Parvovirus B19 they develop immunity to it and will not usually become infected again.

How is "Fifth Disease" diagnosed?

Medical practitioners usually diagnose "Fifth Disease" by the distinctive "slapped cheek" rash and lacy net-like rash that appears on the body. There is also a blood test available to confirm diagnosis but it is not considered necessary in healthy children.

How is "Fifth Disease" spread?

Parvovirus B19 is spread through the air when a person who has the virus sneezes, coughs, or speaks. Parvovirus B19 can be passed along if a person touches an object that someone with the virus has coughed or sneezed on. It can also be spread through shared drinking glasses and

utensils. A person with Parvovirus B19 is most contagious from 4 to 28 days before the rash appears, so they can pass it along before they even know that they are sick. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention do not recommend exclusion from school or work for individuals diagnosed with “Fifth Disease.”

What can I do to protect myself from “Fifth Disease?”

Practice good health habits

- Wash your hands frequently
- Cover coughs and sneezes
 - Use sleeve NOT hands
- Avoid touching nose, mouth, and eyes
- Eat healthy foods
- Exercise
- Reduce stress
- Get plenty of rest

Discuss potential for occupational exposure/immune status with primary healthcare provider

- Especially important if of child-bearing age

What should I do if I get “Fifth Disease?”

“Fifth Disease” is caused by a virus. It cannot be treated with antibiotics. At this time, no antiviral medication or vaccination for Parvovirus B19 have been developed. There is no specific treatment for “Fifth Disease.” Treatment is based on symptoms present (fever, cold symptoms, muscle ache, itchy rash) according to primary healthcare provider recommendations. Always contact primary healthcare provider with any questions or concerns.

- **Exposure during pregnancy**
 - Consult with obstetrician
 - There is no universally recommended approach
 - CDC does not recommend exclusion of pregnant women from the workplace

Where can I find more information?

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.health.state.ny.us>

<http://www.kidshealth.org>